



**January 30, 2009**

## **Increasing Equity and Choices for Parents: The Out-of-Boundary Enrollment Process Begins in DCPS**

Every year parents and families review the options we have to offer their children for the next year. Many apply through the [Out-of-Boundary Enrollment Process](http://www.k12.dc.us/options) ([www.k12.dc.us/options](http://www.k12.dc.us/options)) to send their children to DCPS schools outside their neighborhood boundaries. Yesterday this application process began and it will continue until March 13, 2009. After March 18, 2009, parents will receive the results in order to make the best decisions for their children for next year.

The Out-of-Boundary process gives us the chance to increase access to more school choices for parents. While principals, teachers and others work to create high quality options across the city, we are also making the Out-of-Boundary Process a fair way for students from every ward to access great schools.

As parents select from options across the city and apply for open slots, I look forward to the time when all parents face a welcome dilemma: which of the number of great schools nearby, is the best fit for my child?

## **Where we are Going: Compelling Choices in all Students' Neighborhoods**

I am a strong believer in competition. Enrollment will go up when we have the most compelling choices to offer students and parents. Especially for parents with young children, it is important to know about what is coming in future years that will make DCPS the most compelling option for their children.

### **SAM Schools for Special Education Students**

The School-Wide Application Model school has shown promising results in other urban districts, in which SPED students are integrated into the least restrictive environments possible. It includes team-building professional development for general and special education teachers who work together to bring targeted supports to each special education student in their classrooms.

This year we opened 8 new SAM schools as part of our targeted effort to bring

high quality and inclusive special education programs to the District, and we will continue to build this as an option at more of our schools.

**More Pre-Kindergarten and Preschool Options** □ The research connecting adult literacy, employment and achievement to the learning that takes place in early childhood is convincing. The foundations of literacy that begin before kindergarten are also connected to later crime and income rates.

While pre-kindergarten attendance is not compulsory in our district or most others, in urban districts in particular it is critical to offer. This year we began to add slots for Pre-Kindergarten and Preschool, and some will be available through the [Out-of-Boundary Process](http://www.k12.dc.us/options) ([www.k12.dc.us/options](http://www.k12.dc.us/options)).

### **Better Quality of Early Literacy Curriculum for Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten**

As we work on a new instructional framework to support schools and teachers, we will use it to improve supports to teachers and to increase the quality of instruction in the earliest school years, particularly around reading.

### **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Schools**

A STEM-focused school drives science, technology, engineering and math so that students will have the skills that will be demanded of them in an increasingly competitive global climate.

However, students at these schools do not only study math and science. Those subjects are combined with a rigorous core curriculum that includes English Composition, Mathematics, Foreign Language...knowledge that colleges and the workplace are looking for in well-rounded applicants. We will select 5 new STEM schools next year. These will neighborhood schools, open to all students.

### **Arts Integrated Schools**

Arts Integrated schools engage students of all learning styles in the classroom and promote deeper learning of core subjects through integrating the arts into instruction. These schools focus on the arts while students fulfill all the core subjects required for graduation, college attendance, and workplace success. We will be adding 5 arts integration schools in 2009 – 2010. These also will be neighborhood schools.

## **Moving Toward Equity and Transparency: Reforms in the Out-of-Boundary Process This Year**

After hearing from many parents about their experiences with the process in prior years, we have made a few improvements this year.

> We listened to parents who felt that past processes have not always been equitable. In an effort to increase transparency, accountability and equity this year, we have centralized the lottery process and centralized the preschool and pre-kindergarten enrollment process. If there are more applications than slots in

a preschool or pre-k program, a lottery will occur for those slots.

> Last year, parents could only apply for 3 out-of-boundary schools. This year they may apply to 5.

> This year the application period is longer, allowing parents more time to weigh their options.

> Last year we heard concerns from parents who had children in out-of-boundary elementary schools who were moving on to middle school the next year. Because their children had already settled into their routines and peer groups, many parents naturally felt it was best for their children to continue on to the out-of-boundary middle school. Beginning this year, children are guaranteed places in those middle schools. Parents only need to follow [the appropriate timelines for registering \(www.k12.dc.us/options\)](http://www.k12.dc.us/options), and their children will be able to continue on with their peers.

Now in our second year of reform, we are moving beyond the infrastructure and facilities planning that required immediate focus and energy last year: ensuring working heaters in the winter and air conditioned classrooms in the heat, delivering textbooks, providing better cafeteria food, and meeting other basic needs that students and teachers simply must have in order to focus on their work.

The plans for longer-term support in these areas are now being implemented, and we still have work to do in building infrastructure and streamlining our processes. However, this year is undoubtedly tougher as we dig into the harder discussions and decisions about teaching and learning, curriculum and instruction, and student behavior.

Stay tuned for more information on community and school engagement that will mark the most difficult but most rewarding work to come.

**If you would like to read more about the Out-of-Boundary Process, please see [www.k12.dc.us/options](http://www.k12.dc.us/options).**

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District of Columbia Public Schools ([www.k12.dc.us](http://www.k12.dc.us))  
Office of the Chancellor  
825 North Capitol Street NE, 9th floor  
Washington, DC 20002  
202-442-5885